



Copenhagen International Seminar

JOHN THE BAPTIST AS A REWRITTEN FIGURE IN LUKE-ACTS

Christina Michelsen Chauchot



John the Baptist as a Rewritten Figure in Luke-Acts

John the Baptist as a Rewritten Figure in Luke-Acts compares the Gospel of Luke's account of John's ministry with those of Matthew, Mark, and John to make the case for the hypertextual relationship between the synoptic gospels.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I situates the Gospel of Luke within the broader context of biblical rewritings and makes the general case that a rewriting strategy can be detected in Luke, while Parts II and III combined offer a more detailed and specific argument for Luke's refiguring of the public ministry of John the Baptist through the use of omitted, new, adapted, and reserved material. While the "two source hypothesis" typically presupposes the independence of Luke and Matthew in their rewritings of Mark and Q, Chauchot argues that Luke was heavily reliant on Matthew as suggested by the "L/M hypothesis". Approaching the Baptist figure in the synoptic gospels from a literary-critical perspective, Chauchot examines "test cases" of detailed comparative analysis between them to argue that the Gospel of Luke makes thematic changes upon John the Baptist and is best characterized as a highly creative reshaping of Matthew and Mark.

Making a contribution to current research in the field of New Testament exegesis, the book is key reading for students, scholars, and clergy interested in New Testament hermeneutics and Gospel writing.

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Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.

(Mt 13:52)



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Abbreviations

Unless otherwise stated, all abbreviations of journals and monograph series follow Siegfried M. Schwertner, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete 3. Auflage*. Berlin/Boston: W. de Gruyter, 2014.

ABRL	The Anchor Bible Reference Library
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
BECNT	Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament
BETHL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BHTh	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
BToSt	Biblical Tools and Studies
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
CIS	Copenhagen International Seminar series
CNT(N)	Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
DTT	Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift
<i>ErIsr</i>	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
FBE	Forum for Bibelsk Eksegese
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
HThS	Harvard Theological Studies
HBS	Herders biblische Studien
HThKNT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
Hermeneia	Hermeneia: A critical and historical commentary on the Bible
ICC	International Critical Commentary (of the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments)
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period</i>

JSJS	Supplements to the <i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman period</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNT.S	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> . Supplement series
JSPE	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPE.S	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i> . Supplement series
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
KEK.S	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament. Sonderband
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LHB	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
MdB	Le Monde de la Bible
MSSNTS	Monograph Series: Society for New Testament Studies
NA	<i>Nestle-Aland. Novum Testamentum Graece</i> (28th edition, 2012)
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NT	<i>Novum Testamentum, An international quarterly for New Testament and related studies</i>
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RSR	Recherche de Science Religieuse
SBLBMI	Society of Biblical Literature, the Bible and its Modern Interpreters
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
StPB	Studia Post Biblica
StTDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
SKK.NT	Stuttgarter kleiner Kommentar. Neues Testament
StNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SVigChr	Supplements to <i>Vigilae Christianae</i>
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
ThHK	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
ThZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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Part I

The Gospel of Luke as a biblical rewriting



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Introduction

Biblical rewritings and the L/M hypothesis

The present study is a contribution to current research in the field of New Testament exegesis. It approaches the canonical gospels from a literary-critical perspective, employing insights from recent research on biblical rewritings in order to shed light on synoptic studies and the study of gospel interpretation. I here distinguish between *biblical rewritings* as a large category of biblical texts such as, for example, the New Testament texts, and *rewritten Bible/rewritten Scripture* as a narrow subcategory, which has been used both as a narrow genre definition and as a term to describe the composing and interpreting methods employed. In 2005 Moshe J. Bernstein stressed the importance of separating the method from the genre. Bernstein qualified the term “rewritten Bible” as a useful tool for classification: “It is necessary to distinguish between the process ‘rewriting the Bible’ and the genre ‘rewritten Bible’” (Bernstein 2005: 195). In my view the latter is a literary classification, which the former is not. The narrow utilization of the term serves to place it as a subcategory of biblical interpretation in antiquity. Bernstein warns against replacing the term: “If we were to give up the category ‘rewritten Bible’ as a genre by using it in the looser sense employed by many scholars, then we shall simply have to find another generic term to replace its narrow use” (Bernstein 2005: 196).

The following discussion of rewritten Bible will consider the problem of anachronism in dealing with the term “biblical” literature in a pre-canonical context. Based on Geza Vermes’ focus on “rewritten Bible” in literature from Second Temple Judaism (Vermes 1961), I seek to trace the development of a creative textual strategy in the synoptic gospels as exemplified by the portrait of John the Baptist in the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. I shall refer to the Lukan double work as “Luke-Acts”. Cadbury introduced this expression in 1926 (Cadbury 1926). When I refer to the Gospel of Luke as “Luke” I refer to the written text transmitted in the earliest collections of manuscripts. I base my thematic analyses on Luke in Nestle-Aland (2012), conscious that it is an artificial reconstruction of different manuscripts. The portrait of John the Baptist in Luke can be compared to that of the other three canonical gospels. My analysis is not based upon text critical

assessments. The aim is to compare overtly different narrative strategies in the four reconstructed gospels. I seek to answer the following two questions: Is it possible to conceive of the evolution of the Baptist portraits throughout the gospels as reflections of different theological agendas? And, could these portraits disclose a particular Lukan conception of John's public ministry that is different from a supposedly earlier conception in Mark and Matthew?

My investigation focuses on the narrative strategy in Luke-Acts through an analysis of John the Baptist as a "rewritten figure". The four gospels all have an introductory paragraph on the public ministry of the Baptist. Their accounts, however, differ greatly from one another. Of these, Luke's presentation is the most extensive, sharing material with the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and John, and with Josephus' *Antiquities*, especially pertaining to the ethical aspect of John's proclamation. Moreover, in Luke's diptych infancy narrative about the births of John and Jesus, and in Acts, Luke adds special material on the Baptist figure, whereas Paul's letters as the earliest writings of the New Testament have no mention of John the Baptist, nor of his baptism.

Throughout my analysis, it will be demonstrated how Luke's depiction of John the Baptist can be considered a creative rewriting of Mark and Matthew rather than a "mere" compilation of Mark and a presumed lost source labeled Q. This approach is based on on-going exegetical research on the synoptic problem where the "Two Source Hypothesis" (2SH) has been disproven. Representatives of rewriting theories such as the "L/M hypothesis" imply that Luke rewrites both Mark and Matthew. Francis Watson therefore proposes the term the "L/M (= Luke/Matthew) theory". He argues: "In the context of an attempt to show that the phenomena of the synoptic gospels makes best sense on the theory that Luke had both Mark and Matthew at his disposal as he composed his own gospel" (Watson 2013: 118–119). As we shall see in the following, both the 2SH and the L/M hypothesis presuppose that Luke displays some kind of literary dependence on one or more of the other gospels. Proponents of the 2SH do, however, strongly disagree on the *number* of already known or transmitted sources and on the question of the *chronology* of Matthew and Luke's redaction. These current explanations of the synoptic problem presuppose two different attitudes towards sources and disclose thereby different comprehensions of the *status* of the text.

I shall demonstrate that Vermes' concept of rewritten Bible is part of a larger hermeneutical perspective, and show to what extent it differs from structuralism's concept of "narrative expansion". In approaching the gospels as biblical rewritings, I am faced by a hermeneutical question: what kind of truth is pretended by the text? Before the hermeneutical question can be addressed, I need to analyse the compositional and exegetical aspect of this particular rewriting. Does the Lukan narrative resemble a reliable compilation of sources, or a creative rewriting of sources? These questions demand a critical and constructive approach to Luke as a biblical rewriting. As early as 1966, R.T. Simpson argued: "It seems very likely that there will always be some doubt about the sources of St Luke, as of the other synoptic gospels,

just because the evangelists saw themselves not as compilers, but as *authors*” (Simpson 1965–1966: 283).

Michael D. Goulder’s *Luke: A New Paradigm* (1989) marks an attempt to present the Gospel of Luke as a rewriting of Matthew. He also proposes an alternative paradigm to what he labels the standard paradigm on the relationship between the gospels. Of the eight hypotheses in the standard paradigm of the 2SH, Goulder recognizes only the third which claims Markan priority (Goulder 1989: 5). The sixth of his eight new hypotheses introduces Luke as rewritten Matthew:

Luke wrote his Gospel about 90 for a more Gentile church, combining Mark and Matthew. He re-wrote Matthew’s birth narratives with the aid of the Old Testament, and he added new material of his own creation, largely parables, where his genius lay. The new material can almost always be understood as a Lucan development of matter in Matthew. There was hardly any L (*Sondergut*).

(Goulder 1989: 22–23)

The ambitious layout of Goulder’s commentary tends to explain the entire gospel in relation to a presupposed reworking of Matthew.

My primary aim is to examine whether there are examples of Luke’s knowledge and use of Matthew in the material that they both share about John the Baptist’s public ministry. My criticism of the 2SH will be given through a detailed exegesis of John the Baptist in Luke 3:1–20 in order to demonstrate that the specific material which is *shared* by Matthew 3:1–17 and Luke 3:1–20, traditionally called the double tradition material, is better explained by the L/M hypothesis than by the 2SH. This material can alternatively be studied as *modified* material according to the method of the biblical rewritings, which was a common literary practice at the time of redaction. First, Matthew and Luke are potentially not rewriting a common lost source, and second, it has not been proven that they make independent use of Mark. More precisely, Luke has not necessarily edited Mark independently of Matthew.

Gospel interpretation and the synoptic problem

This book tests the literary relationship between the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, with a focus on Luke’s rewriting of the Baptist figure. The 2SH is at the centre of my investigation and I contest the presumption that Matthew and Luke used Mark independently of one another. One pillar of the 2SH is the recognition of Mark as prior to Matthew and Luke. A second pillar is the assumption of the existence of a (hypothetical) source Q as an explanation for the double tradition, which is the material Matthew and Luke have in common beyond their dependence on Mark. My first objection to the 2SH is the lack of material evidence for a common source to Matthew and Luke. Not a single fragment of Q has ever been found. The 2SH presupposes a